

News Release



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Great Grandson of Booker T. Washington

Jackson Returns to Old Neighborhood As New Chief of State Parks in LA

LOS ANGELES – Theodore L. Jackson, Jr. has returned to his hometown of Los Angeles to assume the role as chief of State Parks in Southern California, Acting State Parks Director Ruth Coleman announced today.

Jackson is a former ranger and 20-year veteran of California State Parks. He also is the great grandson of Booker T. Washington, one of the most influential African American leaders of the 1800s and early 1900s.

Coleman, in making the appointment, called Jackson “an extremely talented and valued member of the State Parks team.”

“Ted’s new office in downtown Los Angeles is near the same neighborhood where he grew up,” she noted. “I believe he has a special feel for the urban core of Los Angeles and will be a great asset for State Parks as we pursue our important goals there.”

Jackson, who grew up in downtown Los Angeles, said he is looking forward to helping shape the renaissance taking shape in Los Angeles, particularly as it relates to the acute need for open space. This is particularly true along the Los Angeles River, where State Parks is now creating two new parks at Cornfield and Taylor Yard.

“Los Angeles is the second biggest city in the nation,” Jackson said. “Everything is magnified here. The spotlight shines brighter here. If we are successful in Los Angeles, hopefully we can duplicate that success in other urban areas of this great state.”

Before his recent appointment, Jackson served as District Superintendent of the San Joaquin District, which includes Millerton Lake State Recreation Area, Fort Tejon State Historic Park and Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, which preserves a 1908 town that was founded, financed and governed by African Americans, the only such town in the state.

As Chief of the Southern Field Division, Jackson will direct one of the largest divisions in the State Park system, a division comprised of six districts that includes the department's Angeles District, which is focusing on developing urban parks in the Los Angeles area.

Jackson's family moved to Los Angeles when was an infant. His father, a physician and surgeon, maintained an office in South Central Los Angeles. The family settled in the View Park area of Los Angeles.

Jackson attended Los Angeles city schools, and graduated from Crenshaw High School. Jackson went on to earn two bachelor's of arts degrees, one in literature from the Claremont McKenna College at Pomona, the other in business administration from California State University, Sacramento.

Jackson joined State Parks in 1981 as a ranger cadet. He spent the first 10 years of his career assigned to the Southern California region, including four years in the Angeles District, which includes the city of Los Angeles. In 1990 he was transferred to Northern California, where he was assigned to Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. In 1995 he transferred to headquarters in Sacramento where he worked in the Human Rights Office and later as liaison to the Park and Recreation Commission, which oversees the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Jackson's parents made education an important part of his upbringing and, echoing the legacy of Booker T. Washington, believed education was the key to success in life.

"I remember as a child we had two prominent pictures in our house – one of John F. Kennedy and the other of Booker T. Washington," Jackson said. "When we were growing up there was no question about whether we were going to college. The only question was which one."

Jackson's mother, Gloria Washington Jackson, is Booker T. Washington's grandchild.

Washington was the foremost black educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He was born a slave in rural Virginia and grew up on a tobacco plantation. The first time he attended school was to carry the books of his owner's daughters. After emancipation, Washington moved with his family to work in the salt furnaces and coal mines of West Virginia.

Washington, who was self-educated, ultimately attended college at Hampton Institute, and eventually taught there himself. In 1881 he became the first president of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama and by 1900 the school had become the best-supported black educational institution in the country. Known today as Tuskegee University, the school is considered one of the top colleges for African Americans in the United States.

Washington was a noted speaker, and authored a widely-read biography, "Up From Slavery" in 1901. He founded the National Negro Business League in 1900, and was the chief black advisory to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.

Washington died in 1915 at the age of 59.

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